

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00
XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 EPG-02 SIL-01 OMB-01 /100 W
-----125912 291455Z /44

R 281951Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9472
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L NASSAU 0898

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT BF
SUBJ: ELECTIONS

REF: NASSAU 0855 AND PREVIOUS

1. SUMMARY. WITH ONLY
EIGHTEEN DAYS LEFT FOR CAMPAIGNING,
ALL THREE MAJOR PARTIES CONTESTING THE ELECTIONS ARE HOLDING
RALLIES ALMOST NIGHTLY IN NEW PROVIDENCE AND THE OUT ISLANDS
AS ARE THE INDEPENDENTS. CERTAINLY, HOWEVER, THE PRE-ELECTION
PERIOD HAS REACHED NO "FEVER PITCH" AND THE MAN ON THE STREET
SEEMS SINGULARLY APATHETIC TO POLITICAL ORATORY, PROMISES AND
PUBLICITY STUNTS. JUDGING BY THE SIZE OF THE CROWDS ATTRACTED
TO RALLIES IN NASSAU THE PLP APPEARS TO BE MAINTAINING A
COMFORTABLE LEAD FOLLOWED BY THE FNM AND BDP IN THAT ORDER.
END SUMMARY.

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2. FEW NEW SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES HAVE EMERGED AND THE CONTEST,
BY AND LARGE, CONTINUES TO BE DOMINATED MORE BY PERSONALITIES
AND ALLEGED PAST ACHIEVEMENTS, OR THE LACK THEREOF, THAN
BY SPECIFIC PROPOSALS TO COPE WITH UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE
ECONOMIC PROBLEMS FACING THE NATION. THE SINGLE EXCEPTION
TO THE RULE HAS COME FROM PRIME MINISTER PINDLING WHO HAS
RECOGNIZED AND PUBLICLY ENDORSED THE NEED FOR FAMILY

PLANNING, A STATESMANLIKE STAND BUT ONE WHICH IS POLITICALLY FULL OF RISK. TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE HIS ENDORSEMENT WAS A FIRST IN BAHAMIAN POLITICAL HISTORY AND NOT SURPRISINGLY WAS VEHEMENTLY AND IRRATIONALLY ATTACKED BY THE OPPOSITION BDP. WHILE THE BAPTISTS AND ROMAN CATHOLICS, WHO COMPRISE ALMOST 60 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION, HAVE NOT YET REACTED PUBLICLY, THEY CONTINUE TO VIEW BIRTH CONTROL AS ANATHEMA AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF BOTH DENOMINATIONS ARE NOT RETISCENT IN PRIVATELY VOICING THEIR OPPOSITION. THE PLP HAS ALSO COME OUT WITH A SCHEME TO HELP FINANCE HOUSING AS WELL AS SEVEN "PROMISES" TK
CHECK THE STEADY RISE IN
THE COST OF LIVING. THESE INCLUDE REDUCTION IN CUSTOMS DUTIES A
PROPERTY TAXES, AND AN INCREASE IN OLD AGE
PENSIONS. THE MAJOR THEME FROM THE PLP, HOWEVER, IS
THAT IT AND ITS MEMBERS AND THEY ALONE HAVE THE "MATURITY AND STABILITY" TO GUIDE THE COUNTRY OVER THE NEXT FIVE "DIFFICULT" YEARS, AND APPEAL WHICH MAY MOVE PARTY STALWARTS BUT FAILS TO "TURN ON" THE UNCOOMMITTEDJM

3. CECIL WALLACE-WHITFIELD AND HIS FNM CONTINUE TO STRESS PLP CORRUPTION AND THE LACK OF JOBS PROMISING "TO SCOUR THE WORLD FOR THOSE INVESTORS WHO WERE SUMMARILY TURNED DOWN BY THE PLP", AND TO REINSTITUTE HONESTY IN GOVERNMENTJN LARGELY BECAUSE OF HIS PERSONAL CHARISMA
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WHITFIELD HAS MANAGED TO SECURE A GROUP OF ARDENT AND INDUSTRIOUS PARTY WORKERS AND THEIR ENERGY AND HIS KNACK FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS APPEARS TO HAVE SECURED HIS PARTY SECOND PLACE AT THE POLLS. IF THE MOMENTUM ALREADY ACHIEVED CONTINUES AND SHOULD VOTERS ELECT THE CANDIDATE RATHER THAN THE PARTY - AS ONE PROMINENT BAPTIST LEADER HAS PUBLICLY DEMANDED - THERE COULD WELL BE A NUMBER OF SURPRISES AND UPSETS ON ELECTION DAY. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE GIVEN WHITFIELD'S APPEAL WITH FIRST TIME VOTERS, LARGELY UNEMPLOYED YOUTHS WHO ARE NOT OLD ENOUGH TO REMEMBER PRE-PLP DAYS BUT ARE OLD ENOUGH TO HAVE BECOME DISENCHANTED WITH THE STATUS QUO.

4. THE BDP'S CAMPAIGN THUS FAR HAS BEEN SO UNIMPRESSIVE AS TO PASS ALMOST UNNOTICED WITH THE TITULAR LEADER, HENRY BOSTWICK, SPENDING MOST OF HIS TIME EXPLAINING AWAY EARLIER FAUX PAS AND CONTENTING HIMSELF TO REJECT, WITHOUT REGARD TO SUBSTANCE (AND ONE SUSPECTS WITHOUT REFLECTION) ALL PROPOSALS MADE BY THE PLP AND TO MAKE PERNICIOUS ATTACKS ON THE MOTIVES OF ALL NON-BDP CANDIDATES. THE PARTY IS BURDENED WITH THE IMAGE OF "BAY STREET" AND THE WHITE UBP AND IT IS DOUBTFUL AT THIS LATE DATE WHETHER IT CAN

OR EVEN WISHES TO BROADEN ITS APPEAL AND THUS INCREASE ITS
BASE.

5. THE VANGUARD SOCIALISTS USING JADED MARXIST JARGON APPEAR
TO BE GETTING NO WHERE AND WERE IT NOT F
R THE PRESS WHICH
TREATS THEIR RELEASES AND "RALLIES" (INVOLVING NO MORE
THAN A HANDFUL OF CHILDREN, ASSORTED "POTCAKES" AND
CATS) AS FRONT PAGE FARE IT WOULD BE FORGOTTEN. NOT SO THE
INDEPENDENTS WHO IN SEVERAL CONSTITUENCIES ARE RUNNING
STRONG AND MAY BE MORE THAN SPOILERS FOR THE PLP CANDIDATES.

6. IN OTHER DEVELOPMENTS
THE CATHOLICS HAVE JOINED THE
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ANGLICANS AND THE ECCUMENICAL COUNCIL IN APPEALING FOR CALMN
AND "HIGH" POLICE AUTHORITIES HAVE WARNED OF VIOLENCE.
"VIOLENCE" HAS FORTUNATELY, HOWEVER, BEEN THUS FAR BOTH
TAME AND THE EXCEPTION WITH THE ONLY INCIDENT INVOLVING A
BRICK THROWN THROUGH THE WINDOW OF A NEW PROVIDENCE BDP
CANDIDATE'S HEADQUARTERS. GOVERNMENT OFFICES CONTINUE
NOT TO FUNCTION AS THE FEW DECISION MAKERS REMAIN ON THE
HASTINGS AND NEARLY ALL BAHAMIANS ARE ALREADY MAKING PLANS
FOR THE HOLIDAYS ANDYFESTIVITIES WHICH WILL ACCOMPANY
THE ISLAND'S FOURTH INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS ON
JULY 11. THE INCUMBENT PLP IS EXPECTED TO MANIPULATE
THOSE CELEBRATIONS TO ITS BEST ADVANTAGE, BUT GIVING THEIR
COMPETITION THUS FAR ON WONDERS IF THEY REALLY NEED
BOTHER.
TAYLOR

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTIONS, ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 28-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977NASSAU00898
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770232-0346
Format: TEL
From: NASSAU
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770611/aaaaajdt.tel
Line Count: 151
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: df149e73-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 NASSAU 855
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2010528
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ELECTIONS
TAGS: PINT, BF
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/df149e73-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009